

Songs in Cities and Gardens

HELEN CRANVILLE BARKER



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SONGS IN CITIES AND GARDENS

BY
HELEN GRANVILLE BARKER



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1919

PR601?
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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

DEC 15 1919

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NOTE

Some of these verses have been published in other books of mine, which are now, however, out of print.

H. G. B.

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Songs in Gardens

THE PRINCESS'S GARDEN

PRINCESS, there are lilies in your
garden,

Stately lilies, white as candles burning,
Roses, and the yellow helianthus,
Restless, toward the sun forever
turning.

Down the blue-tiled walks your feet may
wander,

Where the rose-beaked parrots lean
and listen,

Where the fountains splash in marble
basins

And the fragrant water-lilies glisten.

Shade is cool for you and moons are
golden,
Tropic flowers for your delight are
planted,
Song birds, hidden in the tangled thick-
ets,
Fill the air with melodies enchanted.

THE PRINCESS

I WOULD give my parrakeets and
roses,

All my lilies, all my silver fountains,
All my blue-tiled walks and hidden song-
birds,

All the exotic flowers from fields and
mountains,

For one wild grape spray that grows,
untended,

Quite beyond your ken, oh cunning
warden;

For one wild grape spray—that's sway-
ing lightly

Just outside the wall that ends my
garden.

THE NARROW GLASS

FROM out my bed, no park nor grass
I saw, nor shore, nor neighboring
hall;

But, facing, on the panelled wall
There hung a narrow looking-glass.

In long-forgotten days it knew
The transient shades that bore my
name;

Upon its antiquated frame
Two crested wrens were done in blue.

At early dawn, reflected pale,
A strip of far-off Sound shone bright,
And oftentimes, from left to right,
There passed a little, rosy sail,

Which I, just waked, in drowsy ease,
 Would watch with wonderment, as if
 I looked upon some fairy skiff,
Afloat on legendary seas.

TO SNOW

STRANGE divinity of snow,
Eager other worlds to know,
Spotless spirit, not of earth,
What wild power invoked thy birth?

Wind-blown from the clouds on high,
Alien from the brooding sky,
Thou descendest, silent, free,
Visitant of mystery.

Thou hast known, untouched by bliss,
Radiant dawns with rose-flushed kiss,
Passion of the moons that waned
Left thee pallid but unstained.

From the naked trees down cast,
Stirred within the icy blast,
Subtile shadows, fair, untrue,
Woo thee with ethereal blue.

All the stars to thee have told
Rapture of eternal cold,
All the silent, ice-bound streams
Made thee keeper of their dreams.

Phantom victor over all
Robed in white, resplendent pall.
Mighty in thy shining power,
Dazzling vision of an hour.

None thy mystery may know,
As thou camest thou must go.
Fading god, by earth outworn,
So in mist to heaven upborne.

ARACELI

IN golden Spain I learned to love,
To iron England then I came;
And, lost within the weary crowd,
I never speak that Southern name.

O Araceli! (Heaven's high place)—
Too sad I've grown for names like
these:
They bring me dreams of Seville's courts,
Blue fountains, birds and orange trees.

THE GARDEN ON THE HILL

ARE there still roses
In the garden on the hill?
Is the West wind blowing still
Through daisies and asters?

Has a frost blackened
All the heliotrope's deep blue?
Or are borders where it grew
Still heavy with fragrance?

By the sheltering wall
Does a tall delphinium lean
To the dial on the green,
Where suns write in passing?

Is a nightingale's song
 Heard before the break of dawn
 From the cypress on the lawn,
Till the wood-pigeons waken?

There is no answer!
 Only silence, and the sea,
 Between here and Italy,
That garden and hill-top.

THE BRIDES

WITHIN this formal garden plot
White flowers may grow alone.
'Tis like a chapel, privet-walled,
Where bees the mass intone.

And through the calm, secluded aisle
By sun or moon lit hours,
They pass, in meek, unconscious grace,
Processions of the flowers.

Like brides, in dress of snowy white,
All virginal and fair,
They come to wed the summer days
Mid incense-laden air.

The childlike crocus of the Spring
Tells here her marriage vows,
And here the pallid hyacinth
Most reverently bows.

Each day proclaims a flower most fair;
For one would wed the rose,
And one the shy anemone
The frailest bud that grows.

And so the candid brides appear
And charm their fleeting while,
Till Autumn sweeps the chapel bare
With empty, wind-blown aisle.

THE WAYFARER

I WILL reach far down in the pit of
sorrow

And gather song,
With the bitter past I will deck to-
morrow.

I will turn no cowardly look behind me
But still fare on
Till the glow of ultimate joy shall blind
me;

For I ask no blessing and no forgiving,
The gain was mine.
Since I learned from all things the truth
of living.

THE PLAYMATE

WHEN I was a little sober child
Sitting quiet, in a sheltered
corner,

I heard someone calling;

Then there came a sound of racing foot-
steps

And a wild sweet face

Looked in upon me.

I saw eyes of wonder,

Lips of magic,

And was frightened in my quiet corner,

(Frightened—but enchanted)

“Tell your name to me,” at last I
whispered.

“Have you come to be a playmate?”

But she never answered me, nor pleaded,
Only tossed her hair
And smiled and beckoned.
What could I but follow!
So she led me on
To gay adventures,
Laughter and delight and childish mad-
ness.

Then there came a time
When playing irked me.
I grew tired and longed for tranquil
pleasures.

“Leave me now,” I said,
“Too long you’ve teased me!”
She never answered.
Then, with doubting question,
I looked deep within her eyes
(Beloved playmate!)

What I saw there made me fall a-weeping
Shadowy things I saw—
And pain and sorrow.
“We must part, before too late!”
I told her.
But she whispered with her lips of
magic,—
Breath like Spring
Upon my cheek and forehead;
“I can never leave you—
Never leave you.”

THE ADORNING

FIRE! give me of your flame
Of purest heat!

Rose, lend to me your breath

Divinely sweet!

Star, make me fair as thou

In skies above!

So may I venture forth

To meet my Love.

OCTOBER

NOT happiness, nor pain,
But just a moment's rest from
care
A brief indifference to loss or gain.

'Tis good, the Summer done,
To cease a while from torturing endeavor
And sit here, passive, in the golden sun;

Just conscious of the sound
Of buzzing wasps, the smell of russet
apples,
The dead leaves dropping, silent, to the
ground,

The call, melodious, harsh,
Of circling rooks; the soft October sky;
The blue tide rippling in across the
marsh.

Assuagement now I find;
Oh, fragrant world of land and sky and
sea—
More near to me than man, be now more
kind!

LOST GARDENS

LOST to me forever more
The golden broom that blazed
along the shore
And flaunted brave in all the salt June
sweetness.

Roses, in their bed of mould,
Where clipped box-hedges bound them
once of old,
No more shed velvet leaves from their
completeness.

Where mint and rosemary grew,
Sweet-basil, fennel, lavender and rue,
The leaves are trodden low—to ravage
bidden.

Immaculate and fair—

The walled white garden blooms no
longer there;

Lily and phlox and flag in earth are
hidden.

I trod those flowery ways alone;

The first wild joy of Spring was all my
own,

Frail cobwebs shone for me in dewy
morning;

The still pond was my looking-glass,

Ringed round with iris, moss and meadow-
grass,—

To-day whose pale reflection is it
scorning?

THE OWLS

THREE little feathery owls flew over-
head

As I walked down the frozen garden
path;

One on the chestnut lit, one chose the
pine,

And one a twisted pear-tree, bare and
brown.

There in the garden it was still as death;
Beyond the wintry meadows glowed
the west,

Rose that receded swiftly into gray;
The little owls and I seemed all that
lived.

Softly I tiptoed near the chestnut tree,
Two little, shining, curious eyes looked
 out;
And from the pear-tree two, and from
 the pine;
I fancied for the moment we were
 friends.

ON THE RIVER

THE forest is flame on either side.
The misty, far-off mountains,
Like iridescent bubbles,
Seem tossed against the sky.

A myriad tiny, pointed leaves,
All rose and red and amber,
Along the dusky river
Float noiselessly and slow.

Oh, infinite beauty, fade and die!
Of all the Autumn glory
I only shall remember
This argosy of leaves.

SONGS OF THE RAIN AND THE
WIND

FROM the sleep of fever
I wake with a start
And a sudden rapture.
Outside, in the night,
(O God! the grace
These short hours bring to me)
Is my friend, the rain,
Come to sing to me.
Songs of far-off places,
The grass up-springing,
(Dear familiar places!)
The smell of earth-mould,
Salt marshes, drifting sea-fog
And pine-boughs glistening;

Of these the rain sings softly
While I am listening.

So, when I lie awake
In the prison of fever
The wind comes to sing to me,—
My old companion—
Outside in the night he sings,
His song is for me only,
For all of the world's asleep,
And I, in the dark, am lonely.

Songs of the storm he sings
And snow-flakes drifting,
Wide fields where once I wandered,
And circling sea-gulls.
He journeys free—the Wind—
What's South or North to him!
He sings till, in weariness,
My soul goes forth to him.

THE WELL OF TRUTH

WHY lean so long above the well
And strain your eyes within?

The west is rose, sweet Isabel,
The night will soon begin.

The sun is gold as golden sheaves,
The Autumn sky is pale.
The yellow, yellow Autumn leaves
Skim down upon the gale.

“I lean so long above the well
Because there lies within
One hated good,” said Isabel;
“And one delightful sin.”

IN WINTER

SHE died, quite suddenly, at morn.
I, weeping, fled that house of woe
To find without, in paths forlorn,
Her little footprints in the snow.

THE STAR

THE star danced in the lake,
Uncertain, tremulous,
Deep in the heart of the lake
The star danced.

But far, far in the sky
Serene, unchangeable,
Fixed as the spirit of love
The star shone.

THE FORBIDDEN GARDEN

WITHIN the room for little girls
Long time the little girl abode
And there were many pretty toys
And shining chains and rings and
sweets,
And picture books and puzzling games,
And blue-eyed dolls to dress and tend—
There played the other little girls—
The room was full of soft delights.

The little girl was not content
Within the warm and sheltered room,
She dreamed of gardens all the day.
In dreams at night she saw them still;

The wide, far-reaching garden walks
Where never little girl had trod,
The velvet grass, the rosy flowers,
The garden's fragrant secrecy.

One day the door was open wide,
The little girl went out alone—
How long she wandered no one knew.
The other little girls played on.
At last there came an afternoon
When, looking up, amidst their games,
They saw a child appear, and knew
Their little playmate had come home.

And now, once more, the little girl
Seems quite content with dolls and
sweets.

But, ah! her secret thoughts by day
Her evil, haunting dreams at night!

For still she sees the garden walks
Where never little girls should tread,
The sliding snakes, the flaunting flowers
The garden's awful secrecy.

TERESA

AS walking through a country lane,
Teresa leaves a scrap of lace,
Thorn-captured, ever to remain
Of passing loveliness a trace.

So in each place where she may dwell
A month, a week, or but a day,
She leaves a bit of self, to tell
Its story when she's far away.

THE UNSEEN GARDEN

THE song of the unseen garden;
Beyond the crumbling wall,
Comes wistfully all the day time;
When evening shadows fall
Its murmurous strain, unceasing
Sounds still in palms and pines,
And the wind of the Lombard Summer
Stirs soft among the vines.

The breath of the unseen garden
Is more than thyme, or box,
Than jasmine, or orange blossom,
Or the clustered purple phlox;

More than the scent of lilies,
Or the rose the moon has kissed;—
'Tis the dream that evades remem-
brance,
The joy forever missed.

SNOW IN MAY

I HAVE vanquished the law of the
hours

And broken the bars of Spring:
White I came to the whiter flowers,
And a word from the clouds I bring.

To die on a hyacinth's breast,
And quench my longing there,
Untimely storm has heard my behest
I have conquered the paths of air.

Softer than wing of the moth,
Lighter than kiss of the bee,
I touch her petals in lover's troth,
And perish in ecstasy.

THE POET

DISTRAUGHT, half-puzzled by the
doors that close

Abruptly in his face,

Bewildered where the tide of traffic
flows;

Like one of other race:

Unmindful of the hours or of the day,

Or those who mock afar,

He dreams forever of the rose in May

He sees the evening star!

IN THE WILDERNESS

ONE windless morning, up where the
Lake is lonely

I paddled slowly, looking for water-
lilies.

When I saw them, deep in the cool blue
water

I thrust my hand, the silvery stems up-
rooting.

Mine at last! and a sun-flushed face I
buried

Deep in fragrance, waxen and snowy-
petalled.

Golden-hearted, lilies for Sultan's ladies,—
Drugging my senses to a dull oblivion!

At noon, among the ferns and the
bracken sitting,
Where the forest lane is warm in Sep-
tember sunshine,
Near the path where moccasin flowers
are growing,
Where fire-weed burns, and blackberry
vines cling, strangling,
Round the straight and slender trunks of
the saplings;
There came, unbidden, stealing away
my spirit,
A sense of life,—it seemed its evasive secret
Was mine an instant—there in the
flashing sunshine.

Between the tall, black branches of forest
pine-trees
I saw, at night, the stars in their calm
celestial;

Too cold they seemed, too pure to be
apprehended,
Too fair they shone there—caught in
the pine-tree branches.
With beating heart I went to the fire-lit
cabin,
I could not look unmoved, upon those
shining
Midnight stars, for clear in their change-
less glory,
I read of love—its need of infinite
heavens.

LAND

BACK to my mother, the Earth,
From that stranger, the Sea;
Deep in the hills to have birth,
In the fields to be free;
Free from the fretting of wave,
From the hissing of foam,
And fears of a fathomless grave;
I am home, I am home!

Peace of the islands once more,
With the scent of the sod,
Dwellings of men on the shore,
And the forests of God.
Safe from the dread of the deep,
From its drunken embrace,
Earth, in your arms I may sleep!
I am back in my place.

CECILIA

I HEEDED not the bursting of the
buds,
Nor yet returning swallows on the
wing,
Nor yet the longer afternoons—but
then
Cecilia passed; and then I knew 'twas
Spring.

THE MIRROR

I LOOKED in my eyes
And there saw, hovering,
The frightened ghost of childhood—
“Woman, Stranger,” it whispered;
“Remember me, among the dandelions,
So eager, soft and dutiful,
So full of dreams—
What of you, sweet, tall one?”
I was silent.
I could not speak to the little innocent
ghost.

THE ORCHARD

THE orchard grows beside the Sound.
In Spring I see its flowering trees
Against the waters, wide and blue,
That ripple in the April breeze.

And when in Autumn, gold and red,
The apples hang on every side
Their fragrance mingles with the fresh
Delicious saltness of the tide.

DISTANT GARDENS

THOUGH tossed on foreign seas
At stormy gloaming,
Beneath New England trees
My thoughts are roaming.

Below an azure sky
A park lies dreaming,
And there my gardens lie,
With Summer gleaming.

The garden warm with noon
And sweet with roses;
A red rose falls, and soon
A white uncloses.

The garden, walled and old,
Where white flowers only
Drink deep the moonlight cold
On midnights lonely.

The garden near the coast
Where broom is golden,
And sunflowers flaunt and boast,
To suns beholden.

I fear no sea-worn hours
When dreams can capture
From distant ways of flowers
An earth-born rapture.

THE DOLL

IN taffeta and silver lace
The doll (that was myself) I dressed,
I pinned a rose upon her breast
And left her in a gilded chair.

A tried, mechanic toy; I knew
Of old, that she could do and say
All shallow things in shallow way:
Then I fled swiftly from her ken.

Pale magic of December cold
Bound all the wood; and overhead
A net of star-filled skies was spread
About the pathway of the wind.

Moon-shadows lay where, white and
pure,

The snow on rounded hill-top gleamed;
And all that winter beauty seemed
To breathe an ardent breath of June.

When I rejoined that smiling doll!
One whispered, discontented word
Within her ear was all I heard;
“How silent you have been to-night!”

NOVEMBER FLOWERS

A RED rose hung on its stem
In my dying garden.

“Why are you here in November,
O Rose?” I said.

All around was silence and brown leaves
mouldering,

Burned box hedges and naked branches.

But the one rose glowed in beauty

And seemed to whisper:

“To bring you thoughts of June.”

I found a honeysuckle

On a high wall blowing.

“Why are you here in November,

Honeysuckle?” I said.

Fragrance reached me, heavy as incense
 smouldering,
The curled leaf-tendrils in joyance
 quivered,
And again, as if enchanted,
 I heard the whisper:
“To bring you thoughts of June.”

THE CAPTIVE BUTTERFLY

IF I lie quite still in their net
 Good fortune may befall—
They may think it was only a moth they
 caught—
 No butterfly at all!

But if once they learn of the blue
 And purple of my wings,
And their flash, when the rays of the
 noonday sun
Light all their golden rings;

If once they know me the love
 Of the rose that sheltered me,
And the playmate of all the garden
 flowers,—
 They will never set me free.

A PRAYER FOR ESTHER

AS linden trees within a Summer
garden

Where all's in fair accord,
Baptized with sun and dew, with bird
songs joyous
So let her live, oh Lord!

As river, holding fast the changing
glories

Of sunset, night and morn,
Enriched with flights of dragon-fly and
swallow:—

So, Lord, her heart adorn!

Preserve her mind a harp to all emotion,
Itself, perhaps, as nought,

But finely tuned, and instant in vibration

To every holy thought.

So may she live, at one with earth's bestowing

In every joyous breath;

And pass, triumphantly, the cloudy barrier

That severs life from death.

UNITY

I AM one with the blade of grass and the
giant tree,
The birds and the flowers and roots are a
part of me.

In vain within this, myself, have I
sought my soul,
It is absent, yet here, mere point in a
mighty whole.

The beasts, in their strange and slug-
gishly-worn disguise
Pass by—and I see my soul is within
their eyes.

For the wisest of men is twin to the
 earthy clod,
All Life is but one; the unity—Thou—
 O God!

LAURA AND I IN A MEADOW

LAURA, look at the shining grasses
Here where the south wind blows!
Thronging the meadow, frail but insistent,
Staining it purple and rose.

Still the midsummer all around us,
Misty the air—and sweet,
Waves of wind flow over the grasses
Seeming to break at your feet.

Star-like daisies and flax are smothered
All in this jungle of grass;
A net of wiry stems would entangle
Your feet, if you ventured to pass.

But above the bees and butterflies
hover

Lightly on grasses and flowers—

If we knew only this summer meadow

What knowledge and joy would be
ours!

A SPANISH GIRL'S LOVE SONG

WHAT is warm in my veins like the
sun in September;

What swings me remote as the rose
cloud above;

What is yours to forget that is mine to
remember?

It is love, Rafael, it is love!

MYRA

HER soul is a garden;
In formal beds its fairest roses
 blow;
Some vanished hand has made gera-
 niums grow,
And scentless orchids.

Once pruned and tended,
And trained in stiffly-charming, old-
 time bowers,
They riot now—the frail and careless
 flowers
That bud and perish.

At night, in the silence,
Perhaps a nightingale his heart may
sing,
Or furry bat, on webbed, fantastic
wing,
Wheel near the lilies.

Walled is the garden,
And he who seeks to enter comes too
late,
For chained and bolted stands the iron
gate,
With ivy strangled.

THE LAST HOUR

WITH rocking trees and slanting
sun the very last hour dies

On golden marsh and sea profoundly
blue, in rose-hued skies.

My heart is restless, like the sea, and
stormy, like the wind.

Will love go with us, Barbara, or leave
we love behind?

Oh, hour that stings with cold! Oh,
hour that woos with golden glow,
That blinds with jewelled splendour of
wave and cloud and snow!

Oh, hour supreme!—when once your
bright December sun has set,

Will love be ours to hold, Beloved, or
only to forget?

CONFESSION

M^Y joys I seek by lonely seas,
My friends among the ferns—
The wind absorbs my coquetries,
The rose my love returns.

The heaven of my hopes will be
(If God such fate decrees)
To give my life to roots and seeds
And live again in trees.

But if the burden of my Self
I must forever bear,
Oh, let it be by hidden streams
In heavenly meadows fair;

In fields which neither cherubim
Nor saints, nor angels know;
Where daisies star the undying grass,
And changeless poppies blow!

5



Songs in Cities

THE HOUSE

SMALL the house, too small for an
adventurer!—

(In it I was born, and here must die)
From it I but see the habitations
Of my neighbours, roofs beneath a sky!

If I lean without, at window hazarding,
Curious unfriendly glances shine;
(Such a paltry place I am inhabiting.
Such pretence of keeping house is
mine!)

Prisoned so, a householder unworthy,
Discontented, still I keep the trust
Left to me by older generations:—
Mine this house until it falls in dust.

Dreams have come to me of space
unlimited—

Trackless meadows where the flowers
shine fair—

Day and night I long to be a wanderer,
Free to breathe the taintless outer air.

THE PORTRAIT

A HUNDRED years ago I faintly
smiled

Upon a world I sought, yet half dis-
dained,

Upon the loves I prompted, but be-
guiled,

(Too wise to yield, too proud to walk
enchained).

I wrapped myself in artful mysteries

Lest any dare interrogate my soul

With bold, too-searching gaze; I wan-
dered free,

Giving but half where others give
the whole.

But art divined my secret; with its
skill

It made my painted prison—here I
stand,

For every rake forever more to gloat,

For every imbecile to understand!

THE GENET

JUNGLE sights and sounds and smells
near the London street!

There I walked as in a dream, wearied
with the heat.

Scores of fierce, indifferent eyes watched,
in helpless rage,

For a liberator's foot and an opened cage.

Then I saw a drooping head, pensive but
alert,

And a smooth and spotted shape, sinu-
ous, inert.

Meek white marks beneath her eyes,
pricked and pointed ear.

(This was no mere stranger cat!) and I
seemed to hear,

In some way I once had learned in an
age forgot,
With some sense untrained, disused, till
I knew it not,
Swift inquiry sent to me from a savage
heart:
“Sister, how did you and I grow so far
apart?”

THE TWO OLD GRANDFATHERS

MY two old grandfathers sat before
New England houses

And looked over the fields of grain and
wheat,

The apple-orchards, the pastures, the
woods and copses,

The swamp land where cattle-prints
showed in a black ooze,

The stony hillside where sheep nibbled,
And my two old grandfathers thought
their silent thoughts.

One, gentle, humble, patient, meditated
On the love of God for men, his children;
On the peace of a certain eternity,

The death of self, the brotherhood of
man;
On pain as a teacher, and the beauty of
holiness
And meek submission to unquestioned
creeds.

The other, keen, scoffing, courageous,
Dared to defy the minds of those around
him,
Protested, not by words but independent
deeds
Against the blind intolerance of fools,
Read his Voltaire to sound of Sunday
church-bells,
Smiled to himself, sitting alone, unasked
for,
At the disfavour of men—its weight and
value.

Here am I—my hands full of the spoils
of cities—

My brain puzzled by creeds and theories,

Groping, bewildered, for truth and justice.

I try to free myself, to rise above conditions,

To think my own thoughts, careless and untrammelled—

But the thoughts of those two old grandfathers

(Sitting alone before New England houses),

Sway, alternately, my inner vision.

I am held and hampered by conflicting forces.

NIGHT, AND THE CURTAINS
DRAWN

NIGHT, and the curtains drawn,
The household still,
Fate, with appointed strength
Has worked its will.

Close to the dying blaze
We sit alone;
Nought but the old days lost,
All else—our own.

Far in the corners dim
The shadows start;
Near to your strength I cling,
And near your heart.

Dearest—the whole world ends—
Ends well—in this;
Night, and the firelit dark,
Your touch, your kiss.

MIDNIGHT

I LIE awake and watch the misty snow
Blown wide in dazzling whirls
Through which the street-lights shine;
the windows glow
Like great rose-tinted pearls.

The Northern wind is now abroad; and
roars,
In slow and measured sweep,
Like surf that beats, tumultuous, on the
shores.

To-night I cannot sleep,
For hark! intangible, and unafraid,
The Future faintly calls
Like overtones from carven bells of jade
Enshrined in silent halls.

BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

BELOVÈD, once your pale and
flower-like face,
Smiled suddenly in London's crowded
space,

A pleading vision, dreams within your
eyes,
And love upon your lips, in half-disguise.

You, whom I loved despite of all your
fears,
Within whose grave lie lost my golden
years,

Could I but know that all with you is
peace,
Perhaps this agony of loss would cease.

Oh sweet! Oh, wistful, long-remembered, lost!

What dread frontier those timid feet
have crossed!

In some far heaven, is your smile less
sad?

And has your little shrinking soul grown
glad?

HESTER

THE richest joy of all her life had
missed,

The deepest griefs had ever passed her
by,

Her feeble search for good found little
spoil,

The hands which wrought no evil quiet lie.

Exceeding beauty never crowned her
here,

Not love, but only dreams, within her
eyes,

How great seems now the worth of all
you missed?

Poor Heart! so childish once, and now
so wise?

Not tender, quite, in all her brief gray
 life,
And yet with passing moods sometimes
 so sweet.
Oh, friend, for whom fulfillment never
 came
In life, was death decisive and com-
 plete?

LOVE

LITTLE darling, I love you so,
I watch, at every cruel word's
surprise,
The mist steal slowly to your scornful
eyes,
The hot red colour sweep across your
cheek,
I see you tremble, grow more worn and
weak—

Little darling, I love you so!
What joy to know I have within my
will
Such force to hurt, such potency to
kill

You, frail and small, unloving, still I
hold
Mine, mine, to torture till your years
are told.

A MAN SPEAKS

O UR little, rose-soft sisters,—
With laughing lips and tender
eyes,

Our sisters—made of dew and flame,
Of sunlight, snow, and starlit skies,
Drift on—for ever more the same.

Our little foolish sisters,—
Created fair, that love be born,
And then to pain and torment hurled;
To first allure, and then, forlorn
And puzzled, face an iron world.

Our little broken sisters,—
Too frail to meet their evil chance,
Who made them fair enough for love
But all too weak for circumstance?—
The cry from earth to God above!

A LIFETIME

A MONTH ago began my life,
And yesterday I died—
I know what life can hide
Of bliss, of agony, of strife.

A month ago I heard them tell
Your name, till then unknown,
And now the month has flown:—
Last night we said farewell.

THE CANARY

MY little yellow bird within his
Chinese cage,

That's carved with mandarins and twin-
ing bloom,

Pecks, greedy and alert, a fresh green
lettuce leaf;

Then, spying me, as I come in the room,
He cocks a shining head and, hopping on
his swing,

He greets me with a shrill and friendly
tune.

The morning sunshine slants through
latticed window blinds;

So, for us both, begins a day in June!

OLD AGE

I HAVE finished the rose days of love
And the white days of youth—
I have come, by the road of Desire,
To the gray land of Truth.

And the laughter and anguish are one,
In the shadow of sleep,
I murmur of love—"Did I blush?"
And of pain—"Did I weep?"

THE ARTIST

ONE word—the finished line;
One sound—a perfect chord;
One touch—the tints combine.

Alas! a futile quest,
The work imperfect still,
The end ill-gotten rest.

O Art—forever veiled!
O Truth!—forever dim!—
And feeble hand—that failed.

THE INSTRUMENT

MY body in the dim, refracting lens
Through which alone can know-
ledge come to me,
With these poor eyes alone my mind
can see,
Through this weak frame alone it
comprehends.

Were I but furnished with an instru-
ment
Which perfectly transmitted shape and
sound,
I might go far beyond our present
bound,
See Truth indeed, and learn what
Beauty meant.

IN SPAIN

IN Spain the air grows languorous
The suns more hotly burn
And swallows wheel and turn
Above the worn, cathedral walls.

Along the burning roads of Spain
No traveller makes haste,
Red *faja* round his waist
A drowsy muleteer may pass.

At night, within the city gates,
The shops are like a fair,
Strange odours fill the air
Of saffron, anisette, and musk.

Then, noisily, a shuffling crowd
Strolls up and down the street
Bold eyes with bolder meet—
To hide again behind a painted fan.

In Spain, when pallid morning comes
The bells swing wide for mass,
And black-veiled women pass
Stealthy and swift along the cobble-
stones.

So long away! yet one forgets
The intervening years;
For you these secret tears
Oh land of prayers and music and
disdain.

INSPIRATION

WAS there no single word you wished
to say,
O unforgotten dead,
Ere yet you paused, and fled?
Some word unspoken on that final day,
Forever, now, unsaid?

I sit alone on this September night,
With useless, idle pen,
O—wise beyond our ken!
For you I wait, O soul that took your
flight,
Beyond the world of men!

My mind is yours, your purpose to fulfill

And yours this mortal hand;

I wait and understand—

All my endeavor meets your spirit will,

I write what you command.

LOVERS

ONE waited, Age, the lover.
Till Alice could be won
His hour would time discover,
The hour when youth was done;
O fragrant, warm and tender,
Rose lips and hair of gold,
To Age must all surrender,
And Age will clasp and hold.

But waited lover stronger,
And over-bold and free.
"My love shall guard you longer
Than all eternity!"
He spoke to Alice slowly,
He kissed away her breath
She turned from Age, unholy,
And fled away with Death.

TWILIGHT

THE Avenue is heaped with drifts
Of fallen snow,
In driven icy mist the flakes
Of crystal blow;

And lines of muffled passers-by,
Like mourners black,
Move silent, stiff with cold, along
A shovelled track.

Within, the air breathes roses, long
In spices laid;
The firelight shines on lacquered wood
And old brocade.

I see my image in the glass
So still, so lone,
It might be painted on a screen,
Or carved in stone.

Life, let me leave this scented room
And wander free!
And know one hour of cold and dark
And liberty!

THE NEW PARRAKEET

HIS little neck is ringed with rose,
His narrow tail is blue of dye;
He clambers upside down, and spreads
The clipped, green wings that cannot
fly.

Then, motionless upon his perch,
He stares with round, unmeaning eye;
Uneasily I meet his gaze,
His soul to mine makes no reply.

In what bright tropic was his birth?
What silent forest choked with green,
What giant flowers, what sliding snakes,
Have those round eyes unheeding
seen?

What tossing oceans did he cross
To take up residence with me?
To live his lifetime near my side,
An alien and a mystery!

THE CAT

LIKE caryatid, still as stone,
And black as ebony, the cat
(Her tail around her toes curled flat)
Sits upright on a cushioned throne.

Benign and innocently wise
She looks; no thrills her whiskers
stir,
As glossy as a leaf her fur,
As pale as moons her yellow eyes.

But I have seen her leave the house
All evilly, at early dawn,
To consummate, upon the lawn,
The murder of a young field-mouse.

And when we sleep in chamber bounds
I know she pads from floor to floor
And hears the landing clock strike
four
While still on her uncanny rounds.

THE NURSE

SOMETIMES, when after endless
days of pain,
Our cries have grown too faint to reach
to God,
When the great solitudes of heaven's
peace
Re-echo back to us our shrill despair,
Then comes the tolerant and agèd
World,
And lifts us up upon her ample knees,
Murmurs within our ears her foolish
tales,
And fills our hands with bright futili-
ties.

We know her false and trivial and vain,
Absorbed in senile schemes and crude
display;
Yet, for a time, her presence eases
care;
A fond old nurse she seems, exacting
nought
But pretty ways, and mock obedi-
ence;
She knows no ills her favour may not
cure,
So, looking up within that mellow
face,
We force a smile and find forgetfulness.

TO AN OLD FRIEND

IF I knew 'twas the very day
Oh, friend, so far away,
What thing could I find to say?

If I knew, that, in one more night,
The world would pass from sight,
What word should I dare to write?

Yes, though the hour had come,
My lips would still be dumb;—
I should die as I lived, in sum.

I should pass from my place below,
The years would come and go,
Dear friend, you would never know!

THE CLOSED ACCOUNT

GOD, I deliver up the arms
You furnished me at the start
With which to conquer a mighty world:
Here is the cowardly heart;

Here is the feeble, woman mind,
And the body, frail and small;
Here are the senses, subtly keen;
(I render account of all)

Here is the pride that bade me fight,
And the pride which wrought me woe,
Now I have given count of all;—
Into my grave I go.

TO FIRE

O FIRE, thou free one!
Thou god unspoiled!

Attaining swiftly

Where man has toiled,

Thy formless glory

No mind may see,

Nor brooding fathom

Thy mystery.

Destroyer, Father,

Creator, King,

Thy raging beauty

A living thing,

In desolation,

Bright wings unfurled,

Thy barren pathway
Lies round the world.

All foul corruptions
Thou makest clean;
In flame they vanish
To space unseen;
The shames of nature,
The taints of earth,
By thee transfigured
Know airy birth.

O force supernal!
O rose of heat!
Incarnate beauty,
Unrest complete!
Remote from knowledge
Defying sense,
Ah—whither speedest?
And comest—whence?

More strange than jewels,
More fierce than hate,
Consummate wonder,
Thy flames create
O perfect passion!
O great desire!
Receive my homage,
Resistless Fire!

AUDREY

AND so, at last, the veil drops off
our faces,

The love you found too passionless and
slight

May lead you down to life's remotest
spaces,

May light you on till death's unbroken
night.

At this dim gate the love that you were
scorning

Stands, fragile still, but tender—if
you knew!—

You who must pass beyond all love's
adorning,

Beyond all strong and weak, all false
and true.

Farewell! impatient lover, done with
living,
Receive my helpless tears where low
you lie,
Rest now—the pardoned—as, at last,
forgiving.
This is the very end of love—good-
bye.

THE OLD AGE OF GERALDINE

NOW days of love are over,
Now dreaming days are done,

Here waits no other lover

But Death, the Silent one;

Now beauty's overtaken

And age usurps the days,

Here love leaves life forsaken,

Here's parting of the ways.

From out my glass, in sadness,

A ghost looks now at me,

Its smile is rout and madness,

Its eyes fatuity.

It views me still, undaunted,

Where fairer shade I've seen;—

A face that love once haunted,

The face of Geraldine.

THE STRANGER IN THE CITY

SOMETIMES among the weary
timid faces

I've learned as those of friends,
The faces marked by cities for their
uses,

Their indeterminate ends,
I see an elf-like smile and eyes of wonder,

And know, with sudden start,
A wanderer alien here, a joyous stranger

From some bright land apart.

Return! return! Belovèd strayed from
rapture,

For hark! from far away

Come sounds like wind-stirred leaves,
like falling water,
Like birds at break of day.
They call you back—where none are sad,
or strangers,
And where no world-wrought bars,
With screening pale of precepts inter-
woven,
Obscure the dancing stars.

THE STATUE

WHEN last I drew the curtain
The clock was striking ten,
And groups of girls and men
With voices shrill, uncertain,
Went shuffling down the street.
Before the café doors
A world the day ignores
Found night and laughter sweet.
There sounded harsh and loud,
The horns of passing cars;
Before the closed bazaars
A juggler charmed a crowd.
The dewy air, that woke
A cool and leafy scent,

With human taints was blent,
With trails of wine and smoke.

And what with all that scene
Tumultuous and strange
My fancy could not range
To seek what once had been—
The past too vague had grown,
The hour alone was good,
On high the statue stood
Forgotten and alone.

But when the night was old,
And sleepless still I lay,
I rose and drew away
The curtain—and behold!
There fell a sheet of rain
Upon the sleeping earth;
Wiped out was all the mirth,
And silence ruled again.

And through the silver haze
The lights, a glory, shone
Around the hero gone,
The dead of other days
Serene it triumphed there,
The city's very own,
In immemorial stone,
The statue in the square.

THE CITY

IRON and steel, immense, uncouth,
resistless,

Here is the Town!

Labour and traffic rule it, wealth and
commerce

Weave its renown.

Mighty in power, deformed, unlovely,
sordid,

Soulless it seems;

Come, O ye poets, artists, seers of
visions,

Deck it with dreams.

Crown it with rainbow images of wonder,
Magic of art,
Fruit of your brains and flower of all
your fancy,
Spoils of your heart.

Fling o'er its towers fantastic clouds of
legend
And wild desires;
Let it stand in the dawn and sunset, vast,
triumphant
Mid opal fires,

Till it glows in the thoughts of men a
thing of wonder,
Queen of its own,
Girt with its shining rivers—splendid,
swordlike,
Venice outgrown!

THE MANDOLIN

HER soul was like a mandolin,
inlaid

With pearl and tortoise-shell and
ivory;

On that slight instrument I sometimes
made,

In idleness, a tinkling melody.

And often passers through the jostling
throng

Would stop to hear the ineffectual
tune,—

Half-sweet and half-perverse,—like in-
sects' song

That sounds the hot and drowsy spell
of June.

But now, with strings unstrung, the
mandolin

Lies half-forgotten: will there come a
day

When other fingers, placed where mine
have been,

Another worthless melody will play?

AMBITION

I TOOK my little Love from her place
so still and warm,
And dragged her forth with me, just to
keep her safe from harm.

The woods were dense and black, and
the way was rough and long,
It mattered not a whit, for my little Love
was strong.

Just once, amid the dark, and the storm
that followed after
I heard a childish plea for rest and love
and laughter.

“We may not stop our course!” I
exclaimed, in eager pride;
“What matters weariness and pain when
we are side by side!”

So dim it was and wild, with the rising
wind and gale,
I never knew at all that my Love was
worn and pale.

I never felt her droop, till she slipped
from out my hold,
I never knew she fell—till I saw her still
and cold.

And now I journey on, amid winter’s
snow and sleet,
No little clinging hand to check, no little
lagging feet.

IRIS

NEVER a woman—you say!
Never a wife—

Only the rose of a day,

A dream in a life,

Loved, and unconquered by love,

Remote, in your arms,

Eyes for some vision above,

Deaf to alarms.

Love me or not, as you will!

Prison me fast,

Mine is the victory still,

Freedom at last.

Love, with its tremulous fire
Burns in my heart
Still from a lover's desire
I tarry apart.

Beauty the star of my sky
Visions my own,
Touched by all joys as they fly,
Still I'm alone.

Love is the loser, it seems,
If to earth it belongs.
I am a daughter of dreams.
A mother of songs.

HARVEST OF DREAMS

ARRAYED, as if for sepulchre,
In shroud of woven mist,
Within the narrow gate of night,
A shape of dreams I kissed.

A love, born only of my dreams,
And yet how rich am I!
I know the moon of joy that hangs
In sleep's embracing sky.

In cloudy, arrassed Courts, to hope
And memory unknown,
To pilgrims inaccessible,
My heart received its own.

One instant's space (or was it years?)
The ties of earth were vain;
One pulse beat (or perhaps a life!)
And then I woke again.

CELIA

HER fate to her was all surprise,
She faced her tragic destiny
With puzzled and pathetic eyes,—
A butterfly blown out to sea.

THE STAR SAPPHIRE

I DREAM of twilight, closing softly
down
With veil on veil of cool, delicious
dye;
From rose to blue, from blue to violet,
Then Venus—pale within the purple
sky.

A PRAYER

INFINITE Wisdom, Sanity and Holiness,

Answering all who come to Thee in
lowliness,

Giver exhaustless to those who, selfless,
plead,

Give to my need!

Give me a knowledge born of sense and
precision,

Knowledge of truth and justice, power
of decision,

Let me, in meekness, bid old faiths
decline

If new faiths shine.

Strength of the body, mind, and spirit
give to me,
Let all Thy joy and beauty live to
me,
Let me not fear to laugh, and to rejoice
With singing voice.

And, when Thy will through stranger
ways is leading me,
Humbly I kneel for one thing only
pleading Thee,
Courage to face, unflinching, each new
day,
Courage—I pray.

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